

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

By Howard Fielding

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WE were smoking in Curtis Pounds' studio, half a dozen of us. We usually go there to smoke after dinner, because Pounds does not like the odor of tobacco. On this particular occasion we found Pounds putting the finishing touches upon a woman's head. She was a somewhat startling creature, gray eyed and thin lipped, and she stared straight out of the canvas with the expression of one who would say, "You know why I am here?"

"That's all right," said Earle Dean, to whom I communicated my idea of the head, "but why is she here? What is she going to do or do? What is in her mind? I couldn't guess."

Divergent views upon this subject were expressed by the company, and we agreed upon only one point: that Pounds had painted a fascinating mystery.

"I was driven to it," growled Pounds. "The rent is two months overdue." "I would like to produce a similar effect in a story," said Dean, "and largely for the same reason."

"There is only one way for a man to portray a woman in fiction," said Langdon, who writes book reviews. "He must tell precisely what she does and must say no more about her. Then women will understand what she is, and she will make the same impression upon men that she will in real life—that is, she will be entirely incomprehensible to them, for it is the oldest and the truest truth in the business that a woman's mind is forever and always a sealed book to a man."

"I can tell you a story," said Pounds, staring gloomily at the picture, "that will throw a great deal of light upon the mystery of woman."

Pounds is the coldest misogynist that ever grew out of the ground as the result of some one's having planted a piece of ice. He had a smooth, polite way of relegating women to a place in the scheme of nature a little lower than the domestic animals, which has led some of us to suspect a romance in his life. It could not be possible that he was going to tell us about it, yet there was something quite unusual in his manner as he sat glowering at the picture, which all of us knew must be a portrait.

"A good many years ago," said he, "when I had more money and less sense and was in every way better off than I am today, I knew a woman who was just like every other woman, I suppose, but she seemed different to me. She was a slender, nervous, active creature, and she had gray eyes and a firm, strong, earnest face."

"She lived in the Bancroft, where I had my studio then, and let me remark in passing that it is the best studio building ever put up in this country. The little suits there are comfortable beyond belief, and the lighting has been managed wonderfully well. But the rents—He threw up his hands with a gesture of despair."

"The woman," continued Pounds, "couldn't have afforded to live there, but she happened to be the niece of the owner, and he gave her a fine studio for nothing. She seemed to be a true Bohemian, who appreciated the delights of living like a bachelor. I say 'seemed' because in those days I bothered my head a good deal trying to understand her, and the failure that I made was a notable failure, even for one so gifted as I am with the faculty of not being right about anything."

"My suit was directly under hers and exactly similar in design. The door from the hall opened into the larger room. On the right was what was intended as the sleeping apartment, and on the left a bathroom."

"I CAN'T SLEEP," SHE SAID, with tiled floor and a porcelain tub big enough to swim in. The baths are the especial glory of the Bancroft.

"The woman had her studio furnished rather prettily with plenty of pictures and hangings, a big canopied couch in a corner, an antique writing table in another corner and the materials of our trade in the middle of the floor. Across the doorway, between the two rooms, hung a very heavy dark blue curtain, which was fastened in several places on the sides with thick tacks. I noticed that the first time I was permitted to call, for it seemed so unnecessary. The curtain was so heavy that no draft could have

displaced it, so that, however anxious she might be to screen her bedchamber from casual observation, the tacks were a superfluity.

"Still it was no business of mine, and I should never have given it a second thought had I not chanced to hear two of the girls who took care of the rooms discussing the blue curtain as they stood in the hall outside her door. One of the girls was the regular maid and the other a newcomer, in that part of the house at least."

"You mustn't go into the small room," said the former. "She never lets anybody go in there."

"Why not?" asked the other. "Ain't it never swept out?"

"It ain't been swept out by me," was the answer, "and I'm telling you to keep away from it. Put your hand out that curtain and she'll take your head off. And don't you go peeping, neither."

"Ain't that funny?" said the new girl, with her eyes wide open. "What d'you suppose she's got in there?"

"At this moment the woman answered my knock, and I entered the studio. It was as neat as a pin, and I couldn't imagine what a maid could find to do there. The blue curtain was in its place, and it seemed to me to be tucked up more firmly than usual.

"The woman was not looking well that day. Her eyes were heavy, and the lines of the face all drooped as if with weariness. We were well enough acquainted by that time for me to speak of her altered looks, and I did so sympathetically.

"I can't sleep," she said. "I lay on that couch wide awake all night, as I have done many nights before."

"Why didn't you go to bed?" I asked, with deep sympathy.

"That is my bed," she said. "I sleep there."

"I had supposed that the other room—I began, but she interrupted me hastily."

"No, no," she said, with evident embarrassment; "the other room is not furnished as a bedroom."

"I should think you'd find it more convenient."

"Don't let us talk of it," she said. "What do you think of my roses?"

"She never painted anything but flowers; at least I had never seen her at work upon anything else. They were always correct enough in outline and coloring, and yet in effect they were the flowers that grow on wall paper and not those of nature."

"I said that they were very good, for I hadn't the heart to speak otherwise. That was the sort of work by which she lived, and I did not have much faith in her ever doing anything better. Yet after I had returned to my own quarters that day an idea came to me that warmed my heart. I believed that I had guessed what lay behind the curtain—something better than the roses, something more important than a living, her real work in the world."

"A quite different idea was suggested to me that day, even by a fellow named Harris, a landscape artist with no particular excuse for existence, who was also a tenant in the Bancroft at that time. He was acquainted with the woman and was, I fancy, a little sentimental in his thought of her."

"He told me that a promising young artist, whose name I can't remember, had died in the Bancroft about two years before. To the best of Harris' knowledge the fellow had occupied the rooms then held by the woman."

"I believe," said he, "that she was in love with him, and that she makes that little room a sort of shrine. It may be that the furnishings which he had are still there and that she does not wish any one but herself to see them."

"Here was an explanation of sentiment. My own had been one of ambition. I believed that the woman did her trivial work where all might see and earned her living in the light of day, but that in the secret place behind the curtain she toiled for the ideal which to her was sacred. There was that in my heart which made the fancy grievous. I would have given much to have her share the secret of her strivings with me. It would have made my life mean something if I could have helped her through the rough road that leads upward to the stars, but she did not so honor me."

"Many a day after that I sat in her studio, with my eyes on the blue curtain, but never a hint did she give to me of what lay behind it. Sometimes by night I seemed to hear her walking in that room, but I could only guess what pleasure or pain she hid there."

"It was a long time before I had the inclination to ask her a direct question, yet I did it at last. A man in love will not tolerate such a mystery. There is a chance for another opera upon the theme of 'Lohengrin' with the secret of Elsa's keeping and the fatal curiosity in the breast of her husband."

"The woman put me off with the plea that the matter was trivial. It

was not worth my while to know, not worth the time of the question and the answer. Yet as she said this she stood with her back to the blue curtain and her hand raised in a gesture that warned me.

"Then I got angry, like an idiot, and said some of the most foolish things that ever passed my lips. We were not upon terms that permitted me to insist, and yet I talked as if she ought not to have any secrets from me. Of course I made a joke of it part of the time, and sometimes I hinted at Harris' theory of the mystery and sometimes at my own. She seemed not to understand very clearly, but at last she made out that I was in earnest. And when that conviction came upon her she laughed, and, pulling the tacks out of one side of the curtain, she said:

"Go in if you want to."

"And in I went. Well, what do you suppose I found? Just what I might have expected and the last thing that I actually would have imagined."

"The room was absolutely empty! There was nothing at all in it. She simply didn't have enough furniture for both rooms, and she had so fitted up the studio and left the other room bare."

"The instinct of concealment, which is the basis of the feminine character, made her wish to hide the deficiency, but she had no very strong feeling about it. She kept the maids out of the place because she knew that they would tell, and that's all there is to it, except that the disclosure spoiled the only romance I ever had."

"And in conclusion, my friends, let me warn you that is all you'll ever find beneath this ancient delusion of woman's incomprehensibility. Her mind must ever remain a mystery to man because there's nothing in it. He will suppose that there's a great heart history, or he will furnish forth the mind he cannot see into with noble aspirations and high ambitions. And he will strive and strive to get behind the curtain. And if he succeeds heaven pity him!"

"That's the secret of my canvas. Here's a woman's face intent and earnest. She's coming right at you, with

her mouth and eyes open. And she absolutely doesn't mean anything. I know because I painted her. She's a typical woman, a thoroughly—"

But we six fellows were all men of heart and sentiment. Some of us loved one woman apiece, and some of us loved several, but we all loved, and we couldn't stand Pounds' philosophy another minute. So we arose and fell upon Pounds and threw him out. It was his room, but out he went, just the same. And he staid in the hall until he was willing to subscribe to an apology of a sufficiently humble character expressing renewed and unbounded confidence in woman and the highest appreciation of her mind and soul."

**Crows as Enemies of Terrapins.**  
The crow is the evil genius of the turtle just as of the diamond back and other terrapins. When the warm days of spring come and the female terrapins and turtles leave their beds in the marsh, the crow goes on guard, knowing that a season of feasting is at hand. Both terrapins and turtles seek the warm, sandy uplands near the shore to deposit their eggs. A hole is dug several inches deep and from 20 to 30 oblong white eggs are deposited, and then the nest is filled or covered with sand. Having neatly piled the sand over the eggs the turtle raises herself just as high as is possible, then comes down with a heavy thud on the sand. This is continued until the sand is quite hard, when the eggs are left for the sun to hatch.

In the meantime the crow has been on guard, and by means of his sharp bill and strong claws the work of breaking into the treasure house of the unsuspecting turtle is quickly accomplished and the feast is soon over. The crow is considered by many to be the greatest enemy the diamond back has. It is an easily established fact that the crow destroys thousands of the eggs of all kinds of terrapins, not making an exception of the diamond back.—Baltimore Sun.

**A Rule of Thumb.**  
The thumb is a guide to a knowledge of the mental condition of the owner. He who is in full possession of all his faculties makes good use of the thumb, but wherever there is a tendency to insanity this generally useful and active member falls out of work.

A physician in charge of a lunatic asylum states positively that if you see a person whose thumb remains inactive—standing at right angles and taking no part in the act of writing, salutation or any other manual exercise—you may be sure that he has a diseased mind.

He may talk intelligently and appear sane in every respect, but undoubtedly a tinge of madness is lurking within his brain.—Exchange.

**One Neighbor.**  
A man must not choose his neighbor; he must take the neighbor that God sends him. In him, whoever he is, lies hidden or revealed a beautiful brother. "Thy neighbor" is just the man who is next to you at the moment. This love of our neighbor is the only door out of the dungeon of self.—George MacDonald.

**Quiet Usefulness.**  
The maddest attracts more notice than the quiet fountain, a comet draws more attention than the steady star, but it is better to be the fountain than the maddest and star than comet, following out the sphere and orbit of quiet usefulness in which God places us.—Dr. John Hall.

**Giving Up For Christ.**  
Giving up for Christ is an enriching process. Whatever we lay down here in order to please and honor our Master will be laid up to our account yonder. Our God is a faithful trustee; He keeps His books of remembrance. He will reward every one according as his work shall be.—Dr. T. L. Cuyler.

**The Light of Conscience.**  
Do the right and fear no thought that another may express; They your conscience have not taught, And your lives may never bless. Do what conscience says is right; Then life's saddest ray is yours, And you follow in the light That forevermore endures.

Men will differ and may change, And if you seek to please You may often think it strange That life is no path of ease. For no matter what you do Some will think it is not right; So to your own souls be true; Then you'll follow God's own light. —Philadelphia Ledger.

**God's Economy.**  
Law and order are part of God's economy of human life, and he whose influence is set against them arrays himself against the divine order of society, the order of God, which embraces in it these three divine institutions—the family, the church and the state.—Dr. Lyman Abbott.

**The Presence.**  
I sit within my room, and joy to find That Thou who always lovest art with me here; That I am never left by Thee behind, But by Thyself Thou keep'st me ever near. The fire burns brighter when on Thee I look And seems a kinder servant next to me; With gladder heart I read Thy holy book, Because Thou art the eyes by which I see. This spot shall, that table, and chair and door, Around in ready service ever wait. Nor can I ask of Thee a mental more To fill the measure of my large estate, For Thou Thyself, with all a Father's care, Wailest to turn art over with me there. —Selected.

## RELIGIOUS WORLD.

### CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

Topic For the Week Beginning July 7.—Comment by Rev. S. H. Doyle.

Topic.—Religion and patriotism.—Rom. xiii, 1-7. Piety and patriotism should go hand in hand. Our religion should be patriotic. Religion includes the performance of every duty that devolves upon us in every relation of life. The relation to the state, to the government, is a very important relation of life. The Christian has no more right to ignore or to neglect his duty to the state than he has to treat in a similar way his duty to the church or to the home. Christ taught both by precept and example that civil duties should be performed. He paid taxes to the Roman government and declared that men should "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," as well as unto "God the things that are God's."

Paul in writing to the Romans exhorts that "every soul be subject to the powers that be." Reference here is to the civil powers. In a time of tyranny and oppression the apostle still urges the importance of obedience and respect to the civil government. This should be the attitude of Christians toward governments everywhere. This cannot mean, however, that there can never be an occasion when "the powers that be" should be resisted. If they go beyond their rights and privileges, they should be resisted. All powers delegated to man are limited. Children should obey parents as parents, but not as sovereigns; wives are to obey their husbands as husbands, but not as tyrants and oppressors; citizens are to respect and to obey rulers as rulers, but when they go beyond their legitimate bounds as rulers and attempt to exercise powers not delegated to rulers there is no law of God that demands that they should be obeyed.

Paul's reasons for this attitude toward human governments are many and comprehensive. 1. "For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." 2. Human governments are for a good purpose and hence must be sustained. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." "He is the minister of God for good to thee." 3. This attitude toward human government is a conscientious duty. "Ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." For these causes Christians are not to refuse to pay tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."

In what better way can we commemorate our independence day than by dedicating ourselves more fully to the love and service of our country. It needs the love and service of every Christian. Great problems are before us. The ship of state is sailing through troubled seas. Let us give our best thought and effort to its welfare. Being Christians, let us recognize the fact that it necessarily follows that we should be good citizens.

**THE PRAYER MEETING.**  
Have a good citizenship meeting, with an appropriate address.

**BIBLE READINGS.**  
Neh. ii, 1-5; Ps. xxxiii, 18-22; 18; cxlviii, 20; Prov. xiv, 34; Math. xvii, 24-27; xviii, 15-21; xxiii, 37; 1 Tim. ii, 1-3; Heb. xi, 8-16.

**Soul Wrecks.**  
The saddest wrecks in this world are soul wrecks. Many who set out joyously on the voyage of life, with brightest hopes and prospects of attaining a career of usefulness, happiness and honor, are wrecked amid the temptations and snares that beset them and never reach the goal or haven of their hopes. Some may attain what is called success in a worldly sense—that is, they may attain wealth or distinction or some other object of ambition, but it is often through nefarious devices and at the sacrifice of honesty and honor. Success attained by such means is common, but those who have attained it often awaken to the momentous fact that they have paid a fearful price for it and have wrecked their souls.—Lutheran Observer.

**Where We Meet Jesus.**  
In various places and on many occasions does Jesus pledge us to meet Him in this life at the cross, in the sacrament, in the crises of joy and sorrow, and now once again He appoints us a meeting place. It is the valley of the shadow, where, in the quietness and seclusion as in a lover's glare, He will expect us one day. Is there any spot on earth so common or so wild that it has not been transformed by love? Are there any places in our thought so beautiful as those where we kept true with those that were dearer than life? So Jesus put a fair face on death, so that it becometh but His dark dream as he returneth to receive us home.—Ian MacLaren (Dr. John Watson).

### EPWORTH LEAGUE.

Topic For the Week Beginning July 7.—"Religion and Patriotism." Text, Rom. xiii, 1-7.

"Render to all their dues." Government is not merely a social compact. To be sure, the pilgrim fathers in the cabin of the Mayflower did sign a compact before they landed on the shores of the new world. They made it because they were driven by force of circumstances to settle in a part of the country outside the limits set in their charter, and some unruly spirits were threatening on this account to refuse to obey officers elected under that document. So they bound themselves together as a "body politic for the better ordering of their affairs."

But even then they did not claim or believe that they had the right to make any rules but such as were just and right. The very first sentence of the "compact" recognizes that all just government rests on the will and authority of God. "In the name of God, amen," is the way they began that first state paper of the coming civilization. They also called themselves "the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James."

These were the men and women who had, after heavy losses of property, imprisonment and persecution of many kinds, succeeded in leaving their native England for Holland and, after 12 years of life among a foreign people, now crossed a tempestuous sea with an avowed purpose religious and patriotic beyond all parallel in their own or any previous age. Their intention was expressed in the same writing, "Having undertaken for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith and honour of our king and country a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia."

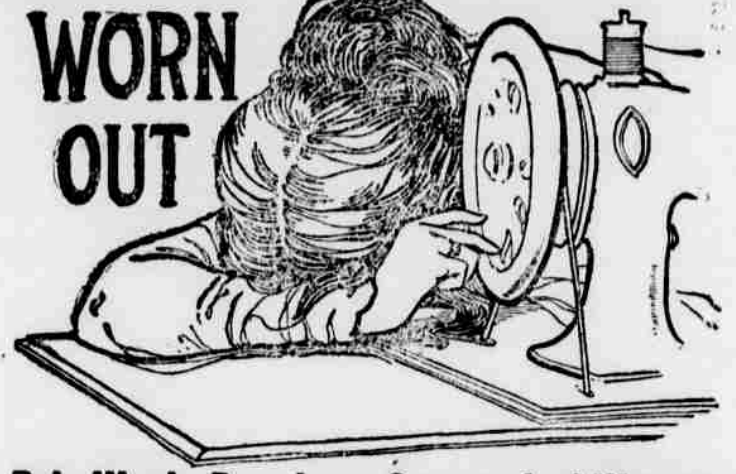
On such foundations as these rests the republic. Not conquest nor search for treasure led this pilgrim band across wild seas to the wilderness of savage men, but desire to found a church and state on the love and fear of God.

On the anniversary of the national birth we should give careful thought to the different conceptions which controlled the formation of our institutions from those which have prevailed in all other nations. Back of the Declaration of Independence made in 1776 is a long history of struggle and striking root from 1620. The ruling spirit from the first has been the sentiment of the men of Plymouth rather than that of those who settled Massachusetts Bay Colony, Virginia, Canada or Florida.

No wonder the nation has grown and is making a new race of men as well as a new type of civilization. Our danger lies in losing sight of the foundation principles on which the fathers built. Religion and patriotism must ever go hand in hand, or both perish.

No socialism of whatever stripe, no anarchism or nihilism, can safely be incorporated into our system. Liberty of man must ever be based on loyalty to God. No compact of men, however oath bound, will hold when God is ignored. Equal rights cannot be obtained among men who deny God's rights. The republic is safe only as men recognize the kingdom of God and become "God's freemen whom the truth makes free."

**Faithfulness in Little Things.**  
Business men themselves being witnesses, there is nothing more essential to success in secular business than faithfulness in little things. You may regard your presence at or absence from the Wednesday evening prayer meeting as a little thing. Your faithful attendance at the meetings of the committee of which you are a member, your being present promptly at the meeting of the visit that you know you should pay the member of your class who has been absent, your speaking cordially to the stranger in the next pew—all these may seem to you to be little things, but just such little things as these are the tests of your faithfulness as a church member and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.—United Presbyterian.



**Pale Weak, Run-down Overworked Women**  
half sick, nervous, tired out with household and maternal cares, constipated, liver torpid, with blotched, muddy, sallow complexions, blood thin and impure, need building up and a thorough renovation of their systems. This is the time you need such a great nerve and stomach builder as

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